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TWO TAPESTRIES WOVEN BY WILHELM DE PANNEMAKER

A FURTHER NOTE

WHEN the note on the two tapestries¹ loaned to the Museum by Mr. George Blumenthal was published in the *BULLETIN* Supplement, March, 1910, it was known that these tapestries belonged to a set originally consisting of several pieces, but at that time reproductions or descriptions of the other tapestries were not at hand. The identification of the scenes represented in Mr. Blumenthal's tapestries as illustrations of the fable of Mercury, Herse, and Aglauros, related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Bk. II, 12, 13, was, therefore, only conjectural. Reproductions, however, of all the tapestries in the set, including those now in Mr. Blumenthal's possession, have recently been found in *Forma*² a Spanish art magazine, accompanied by an article by J. R. Mérida and a note by M. U. (M. Utrillo), and, although Mérida advances the opinion that a fable of Mercury and the nymph Carmenta is illustrated in these tapestries, the new evidence on the contrary appears to confirm our previous supposition as to the subjects represented in the tapestries.

Returning later to this question of subject, it may be now remarked that the set originally consisted of eight pieces, and was probably acquired by Don Juan de la Cerda (died 1575) sixth Duke of Medinaceli, when that Spanish nobleman was Governor of the Low Countries. The tapestries, as it has been stated, were woven by Wilhelm de Pannemaker, and have his monogram in the borders, at least, in the two owned by Mr. Blumenthal. As to the authorship of the cartoons, the theory of their purely Italian origin is less supportable now that a more extended study is possible, and Mérida's attribution of the cartoons to a Flemish artist under Italian influence is doubtlessly correct. The bor-

ders of the tapestries are inspired by or copied with slight variations from those on Raphael's Acts of the Apostles, tapestries, it will be remembered, which were woven in Brussels between 1515 and 1519. To the article in *Forma* M. Utrillo adds an interesting note concerning a set, in replica, of the Mercury tapestries existing in the Palace of Justice at Barcelona. They have suffered greatly from time and ill use and are now in a much-damaged condition.

As to the subjects of the tapestries, the article in *Forma* offers only a somewhat tentative explanation. The opinion is advanced that possibly under a mythological guise the amours of some nobleman and lady are celebrated, or, if one is driven to particularize among the fables of mythology, that the story of Mercury and Carmenta has supplied the theme. Neither of these explanations appears convincing in view of the close correspondence between the story told in the tapestries and that related by Ovid in the fable of the *Metamorphoses* already referred to.

The story in brief is that Mercury, falling in love with Herse, the daughter of Cecrops, endeavors to engage Aglauros in his interests and by her means to obtain access to her sister. She refuses to assist him unless he promises to give her great presents of gold, whereupon the goddess Minerva, angered at this avarice, and from other causes as well, commands Envy to make Aglauros jealous of her sister Herse. Envy obeys the request of the Goddess, and Aglauros, consumed by that passion, continuing obstinate in opposing Mercury's passage to her sister's apartments, is changed by the god into stone.

A description of the eight tapestries follows: the two owned by Mr. Blumenthal are indicated by asterisks.

I. In this tapestry, the first of the series, Mercury is represented at the left descending from the sky to greet Herse, who is returning with her sisters and other maidens from the temple seen at the right in a charming landscape of groves and open fields.

II. With Herse at his side, Mercury walks with the maidens on their way to the

¹On exhibition in the Wing of Decorative Arts. F. 8.

²*Forma*, 1907, No. 19.



TAPESTRY WOVEN BY WILHELM PANNEMAKER (DETAIL)
LENT BY MR. GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

palace of Cecrops, at the left of the tapestry. Some of the maidens follow and others precede the lovers into the great gateway of the palace.

III. Within the palace, Cecrops, surrounded by the gentlemen of his court, welcomes Mercury, embracing him as he steps down from his throne. Through an open door is seen a wooded landscape.

IV. As he ascends the stairs leading from the courtyard of the palace to the rooms of the three sisters, Mercury is met by Aglauros, who demands a bribe before she will permit the god to pass through her chamber into that of Herse, the middle one, as Ovid relates, of three. In the tapestry, at the right of the central group of Mercury and Aglauros, two chambers are represented; Aglauros stands at the entrance of the first with Pandrosos behind her; in the second chamber the lightly clad maiden is evidently intended for Herse. At the extreme left of the tapestry Pallas is depicted in her flight to the abode of Envy to arouse the fell goddess against Aglauros.

V. In the large banqueting hall of the palace Mercury sits at table with Cecrops, his wife and daughters. Behind Aglauros stands a half naked woman, hideous in every feature, who presses one hand on the maiden's forehead and the other on her bosom. This undoubtedly is Envy who "touched her (Aglauros') breast with her hand stained with rust and fills her heart with jagged thorns . . . and that these causes of mischief may not wander through too wide a space, she places her sister before her eyes, and the fortunate marriage of that sister, and the god under his beautiful appearance, and aggravates each particular." This vision is illustrated in the two tapestries following.

*VI. The nuptials of Mercury and Herse; the lovers are attended by cupids of whom one kneels to untie Herse's sandals, while others, flying in the air, open the curtains of the bed.

VII. In a loggia of the palace several couples are dancing; others look on or prepare to join them. In the background are three musicians, and two cupids hover over the dancers. This festal scene is the pre-

lude to the dramatic conclusion of the series in the next tapestry.

*VIII. Tormented by such visions as these, Aglauros meets the god upon the threshold of the palace and angrily forbids him to enter. Whereupon the god changes her into a statue of grimey stone and flies away. In the tapestry the fate of Aglauros is represented somewhat differently as she appears, at the god's command, to be disappearing into the air, a liberty taken with the narrative easily explainable on artistic grounds.

J. B.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS

NEXT season the Museum will continue its project of holding temporary exhibitions of a special character. It is the intention of the Trustees to confine each of these exhibitions to one subject, in a comparatively narrow field, but to have them ultimately cover the entire range of art which is represented in the collections of the Museum, strengthening these for the time by examples borrowed from other collections, chiefly those of private owners, which are not usually accessible to the public. The hearty and generous response with which our efforts in this direction have already been met by such collectors encourages us to look forward to a great increase in the educational work which the Museum will be enabled to perform with their assistance, both by stimulating a general interest in the various forms of art, or the works of individual artists, which will thus be displayed, and by offering to the public an exceptionally high standard for the cultivation of its taste or knowledge of the arts that will be included.

When this policy was first considered, it was thought that each special exhibition should last not more than three or four weeks, but the experience of the last season has shown that their influence has extended much further than was anticipated, and that it has really been felt in all parts of the country. It has therefore been determined that so far as possible the Museum shall make them hereafter of national as